

Intergenerational Transmission of Violence in Military Families: A Case Study of Anglican Church of Kenya, Military Episcopate, Kenyatta University – Nairobi

Milton Kabunge¹, Josephine Gitome², Dr. John Peter Bwire³
Kenyatta University

Abstract

Marital violence remains a widespread concern in military families globally, yet minimal research has examined how childhood parenting experiences foster intimate partner violence among African military families, particularly within faith-based communities. This study investigated the contribution of parenting backgrounds to marital violence in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Military Episcopate, Kenya Defense Forces. Despite the implementation of faith-based interventions: premarital counseling and pastoral support within the Anglican Church of Kenya Military Episcopate, marital violence remains prevalent among Kenya Defense Forces families, with existing programs failing to address the foundational role of adverse childhood parenting experiences including exposure to parental violence, authoritarian parenting, parental substance abuse, and single parenthood.

The mixed-method design was adopted in four military bases (Langata, Laikipia, Mariakani, and Gilgil Barracks). Using a multistage sampling method, 255 married members of the Military Episcopate were surveyed. Information was collected through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The quantitative analysis was done using the SPSS version 21 which involved descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis whereas the qualitative data analysis was done using thematic content analysis. The theoretical basis of the study was the Social Learning Theory and Attachment Theory.

The participants reported remarkably high rates of adverse parenting experiences: 60–75% witnessed parental violence, 83.1% had experienced authoritarian parenting (emotional distance), 49-74% had parents who used substances, and 48.6-63.9% had experienced single parenting or lived with extended family. The childhood experiences were highly correlated with the current marital violence whereby 93.3% had experienced psychological abuse and 34.5% experienced physical abuse in their respective marriages. The important transmission mechanisms were modeling of violent conflict resolution, normalization of aggression, deficits in anger management (73.3%) and disruptions in attachment. The military culture also contributed to weaknesses by creating hyper masculinity, stress when deployed, and hierarchy. The existing interventions of the Military Episcopate were also not sufficient: 45.1% considered premarital counselling sufficient, 46.7% said that the victims were heard in a proper way, and 73.3% said that biblical teachings were misinterpreted and justified the aggressors.

Marital violence in the Military Episcopate is a structural phenomenon based on the intergenerational trauma transmission that is enhanced by the military culture and is not effectively addressed by the current interventions. The comparison between high church attendance (61.2) and near-universal violence shows that the generic forms of faith-based interventions without trauma-informed and evidence-based material cannot disrupt the cycle of violence. Some of the recommendations are the adoption of trauma informed premarital counselling that accommodates childhood experiences, the creation of clear theological training that is clear on the distinction between biblical submission and abuse tolerance, the introduction of relationship education in military training curriculums, strengthening familial

support structures, as well as correcting institutional cultural practices that normalize psychological abuse.

Keywords: Intergenerational Violence, Military Families, Marital Violence, Parenting Backgrounds, Faith Based Intervention, Kenya Defense Forces, Military Episcopate, Trauma Transmission.

1.0 Introduction

In military families, marital violence is a significant worldwide social health concern, the occurrence of which is higher than those in the civilian groups due to the deployment stress factors, combat trauma, and the existing institutional cultures (Marshall et al., 2005; Taft et al., 2011). Although much Western literature is available on this subject, the literature about military families in Africa (especially those who are incorporated into faith-based societies) has been significantly under-investigated, despite their experience of distinctive intersections between military culture, religious teachings, and social values.

A good example of such complexity is the Anglican Church of Kenya Military Episcopate that is an amalgamation of Christian theological concepts and Kenyan cultural ideologies within the hierarchical contexts of Kenya Defence Forces (KDF). The degree of marriage violence in such an environment cannot be fully understood without reference to the experiences in childhood; the results of a 20-year prospective longitudinal study were used to show that childhood exposure to partner violence was a significant predictor of future perpetration and victimization in adulthood (Ehrensaft et al., 2003). According to Social Learning Theory, children learn violent conflict resolution strategies, since observational learning and modelling are the primary mechanisms of acquisition (Bandura, 1977; 2004), but according to Attachment Theory, relationships that children experience during early caregiving stages are the root cause of patterns in adult intimate relationships (Bowlby, 1969; 1973; 1980). However, it is important to adapt such largely Western constructs to the African military populations carefully (Beswick, (2014).

Similarly, to intercommunal violence, family violence is an indication of the transmission of intergenerational trauma (Musembi & Iteyo, 2018), which is enhanced in the military environment by hyper-masculine cultural standards (Rosen et al., 2023), the impact of deployment (Gewirtz et al., 2018), and the normalization of substance abuse (Cottler, 2018). African armies serve under the extended family caregiving systems (East et al., 2020), which, consequently, creates protective elements, as well as vulnerabilities toward military children.

The current article has three specific objectives: (1) establishing parenting background types among Military Episcopate members, (2) investigating whether violent parenting backgrounds contribute to adult marital violence, and (3) examining the effectiveness of Military Episcopate interventions.

This research has implications not only to the Military Episcopate but also to military families in other African contexts by clarifying the interactions between childhood experiences and military culture as well as religious contexts to develop patterns of violence in adults. Religion communities, as was observed by Shannon-Lewy and Dull (2005), can either support or hinder disclosure of violence, and thus, those involving faith based military communities can be considered important realms of preventive research.

2.0 Integrated Approaches to Violence Prevention

This paper discusses the measures that the stakeholders have taken to deal with marital violence in military families. It therefore examines some of the theoretical frameworks and interventions techniques which are outlined below.

2.1 Social Learning Theory and Violence Modeling

According to Bandura (1977), children adopt behavioral patterns by observational learning whereby parents play the role of primary model especially in the family context. Social-cognitive theory also suggests that the violence one observes as a child gets integrated into the system as a justifiable method of conflict resolution (Bandura, 2004). Capaldi et al. (2012) used a systematic review to find intimate-partner violence risk factors after proving that interparental violence during childhood serves as the main predictor for both adult violence and victimization. Kimber et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis which showed that children exposed to intimate-partner violence demonstrated higher aggressive behaviors, thus confirming the existence of direct modeling effects. According to Whitfield et al. (2005), violent childhood experiences increase the risk of adult intimate-partner violence by three to five times when compared to people who have not experienced such violence. The scheme functions under cognitive schemas, in which violence is internalized as the normal way of how families function instead of being identified as a problem area requiring intervention. Such a fact can, however, not be explained by modeling, as there are individuals who were exposed to childhood violence, yet become perpetrators of violence in adulthood. This finding means that there are other processes at play other than behavioral replication, which means that the emotional regulation and bonding processes mediate such effects (Dworkin et al., 2021).

2.2 Attachment Theory and Emotional Regulation

Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) clarified the role of early relationships with caregivers in forming internal working models that determine adult abilities in intimacy, trust, and emotional regulation. Children who obtain attachments with regular and responsive care giving learn the ability to exercise healthy emotional regulation and relationship functioning. On the other hand, secure attachments resulting due to neglect, inconsistent treatment, or scaring caregiver behaviour result in adults who have a problem of intimacy, trust, and affect control. According to a comprehensive review by Doherty et al. (2024), childhood exposure to intimate partner violence has long-term health impacts through the mediating effects of emotional dysregulation and attachment. Through a randomized controlled study, Rosenblum et al. (2018) shown that improving maternal representations among high-risk moms reduces intergenerational transmission, indicating that attachment-oriented interventions may be utilized to end violent cycles. Thompson et al. (2018) insist on the fact that the process of emotion regulation is cultivated because parent-children communication confirms the feelings of children and calms them down, thus the ability to regulate feelings is developed, and in contrast, children whose feelings are rejected, punished, or parents who are dysregulated do not practice such processes. These deficits make the adults susceptible to aggressive outbursts in cases of relational conflicts especially when stressed. Attention to military situations worsens vulnerabilities to attachment because parents are often absent because of deployment (Gewirtz et al., 2021). The authors reported that paternal absence at key developmental stages interferes with the development of attachment and leads to adolescent behavioral issues (East et al., 2020). In the case of military families, deployment separation is a normal stressor, which affects several generations.

2.3 Parenting Styles and Developmental Outcomes

Baumrind (2013) determined that parenting styles have a substantial impact on risk behaviour and competence in adolescents. High control and low warmth, which are the hallmarks of authoritarian parenting, result in children whose level of self-regulation is poor, and who are at risk of substance abuse. Hoeve *et al.* (2009) found in a meta-analysis research that aggressive behaviour and delinquency are predicted by strict and inconsistent discipline. Chao and Tseng (2002) also warned that the effects of parenting-style do not have cross-cultural relevance; what may be considered authoritarian in the western context may not necessarily have the same effect in the collectivist culture which places greater emphasis on obedience and family-

ranking. However, emotional warmth and responsiveness is cross-cultural protective (Rodriguez and Margolin, 2015). Vanassche et al. (2014) concluded that parental role modelling has a more significant effect on adolescent behaviour than intact families do, and children who witness positive conflict resolution and emotional management develop the same skills regardless of whether it is a single or two parent family, as compared to those who see violence and dysregulation in stable single parent families.

2.4 Parental Substance Abuse Effects

Children of the following ages may exhibit parental substance abuse: 2 to 5 years old, 6 to 13 years old, and 14 to 17 years old, and most of them Kelley and Fals-Stewart (2004) established that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders is very high among children of drug or alcohol abusing parents compared with the children of non-abusing parents. The impact of substance abuse on parenting is the depletion of parenting ability due to emotional unavailability, lack of discipline, parental neglect, and increased exposure to violence (Lander et al., 2013).

In a systematic review, Park and Schepp (2015) found that children of alcoholics have inherent types of vulnerabilities, which encompass attachment disturbances, Parentification, exposure to traumatic experiences, and modelling of maladaptive coping behaviors. However, these risks can be mitigated by resilience variables (positive peer relations, supportive extended family, and individual competencies). Military culture where alcohol is treated as a way to bond as a unit and cope with stress (Rosen et al., 2023) introduces a situation in which substance abuse is considered normal and not pathological, thus exacerbating childhood vulnerability when military members observe alcohol abuse in their parents and continuing generations of alcohol-enabled violence.

2.5 Single Parenthood and Alternative Caregiving

McLanahan and Sandefur, (1994) showed that single parenthood is associated with more child behavioral problems, which is attributable to economic hardship as opposed to father absence in itself. Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) challenged the essential father claims, asserting that the quality of caregiver ship and household economic wellbeing is more critical than father presence. Yoon et al. (2018) also discovered that father involvement curbs behaviour problems in at-risk children, even though whether one is mediated through the father-child interaction is the interaction of the distinct groups, the quality of father-child interaction is the true mediator. Extended family care by grandparents and other relatives is a culturally

accepted phenomenon in the African setting, which offers possible protective benefits (Ismayilova, et al., 2012).

Extended family caregiving is however, also an indicator of inability by the parents to meet their care giving duties as a result of their death, abandonment or dysfunction. Therefore, the impacts and significance of alternative caregiving are context-specific because of environmental conditions and the quality of relationships and not the structures alone.

2.6 Military Culture Amplification

Marshall et al. (2005) documented that military culture creates unique risk factors for intimate partner violence including hyper-masculinity norms discouraging emotional vulnerability, hierarchical structures replicating control patterns in intimate relationships, combat trauma producing hypervigilance and aggression, and frequent relocations disrupting social support networks.

Taft et al. (2011) through meta-analysis established that PTSD significantly predicts violence against intimate partners among active-duty soldiers and veterans. Combat exposure creates emotional numbing, irritability, and hyper arousal that manifest in relational contexts as emotional unavailability and aggressive outbursts (Cottler, 2018).

Gewirtz et al. (2018) found that military parenting programs focusing on deployment-related stress can reduce parental distress and suicidal ideation, suggesting preventive interventions can mitigate military-specific risk factors. However, most programs focus on veterans rather than active-duty personnel and rarely address childhood antecedents of violence (Piehler et al., 2024).

2.7 Faith-Based Interventions: Help or Hindrance

Shannon-Lewy and Dull (2005) documented that Christian clergy responses to domestic violence vary widely, with some providing essential support while others inadvertently enable abuse through theological misinterpretation. Biblical teachings on submission, forgiveness, and marriage permanence can be weaponized to silence victims and excuse perpetrators.

Knick Meyer et al. (2010) found that collaborative approaches between faith communities and domestic violence services produce better outcomes than either sector alone. Faith leaders provide spiritual support and community accountability, while domestic violence advocates supply safety planning and legal resources.

According to Pargament *et al.* (2013), religious coping can be either positive (collaborative problem-solving with God, spiritual reframing) or negative (spiritual struggle, punitive God representations). Positive religious coping correlates with better mental health outcomes, while negative religious coping predicts worse outcomes including violence tolerance (Bernardi & Steyn, 2021).

The Military Episcopate represents a unique context where military and religious authority structures overlap, potentially creating both enhanced leverage for intervention and risks of institutional pressure toward violence endurance.

More recent scholars engage on the matter and argue that faith communities occupy a contradictory position in responses to gender-based violence simultaneously capable of enabling harm and facilitating healing. According to Mombo and Joziase (2022), some of the theological constructs, specifically the African idea of the term *vumilia* (perseverance), have been used to coerce women into abusive situations in the name of spiritual fidelity. Similar arguments by Freeks (2023), who notes that gender-based violence is a form of systematic warfare on families and that practical theology should go beyond passive moral disapproval and should move to constructive interventions using organized ecclesia. Khosa-Nkatini and Muthivhi (2026) take this argument further and claim that practical theology may be used strategically as an institutional system to deconstruct the cultural and religious framework that perpetuates gender-based violence.

The point of convergence between these scholars is important: all tend to believe that theological misappropriation is one of the main ways in which violence is perpetuated, and that the church cannot be a passive contributor. This point of contention mostly has been an emphasis point; Mombo and Joziase emphasize gender and cultural critique, Freeks the ecclesial responsibility, and Khosa-Nkatini and Muthivhi the structural theological reform as a preventative tool.

When applied to this research, these arguments shed some light on the explanation of why 73.3% of respondents in the research defined distorted biblical teachings as aggressor-justifying. The issue of the military episcopate is not so much the pastoral inadequacy but an even greater matter of theological formation, where the structures of endurance of the “*vumilia*” type painted victims silent and where the training of the chaplaincy, as advocated

by Freeks (2023), needs to be redesigned explicitly as a concrete theological intervention and not as a generic counselling add-on.

This study was therefore guided by three objectives: to establish the types of parenting backgrounds among Military Episcopate members, to investigate whether violent parenting backgrounds contribute to marital violence, and to examine the effectiveness of Military Episcopate interventions in mitigating marital violence. The primary variable was marital violence as the dependent variable, examined through psychological, physical, and emotional dimensions. The independent variable were four parenting backgrounds: exposure to parental violence, authoritarian parenting with emotional distance, parental substance abuse, and single parenthood or alternative caregiving arrangements. Anglican Church teachings and premarital counseling programs served as the intervening variable, positioned theoretically as capable of either moderating or exacerbating the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and adult marital violence. Together, these variables frame a study that is uniquely positioned to generate contextually grounded, evidence-based insights into how childhood experiences, military culture, and faith-based institutional responses shape patterns of marital violence within the Kenya Defence Forces.

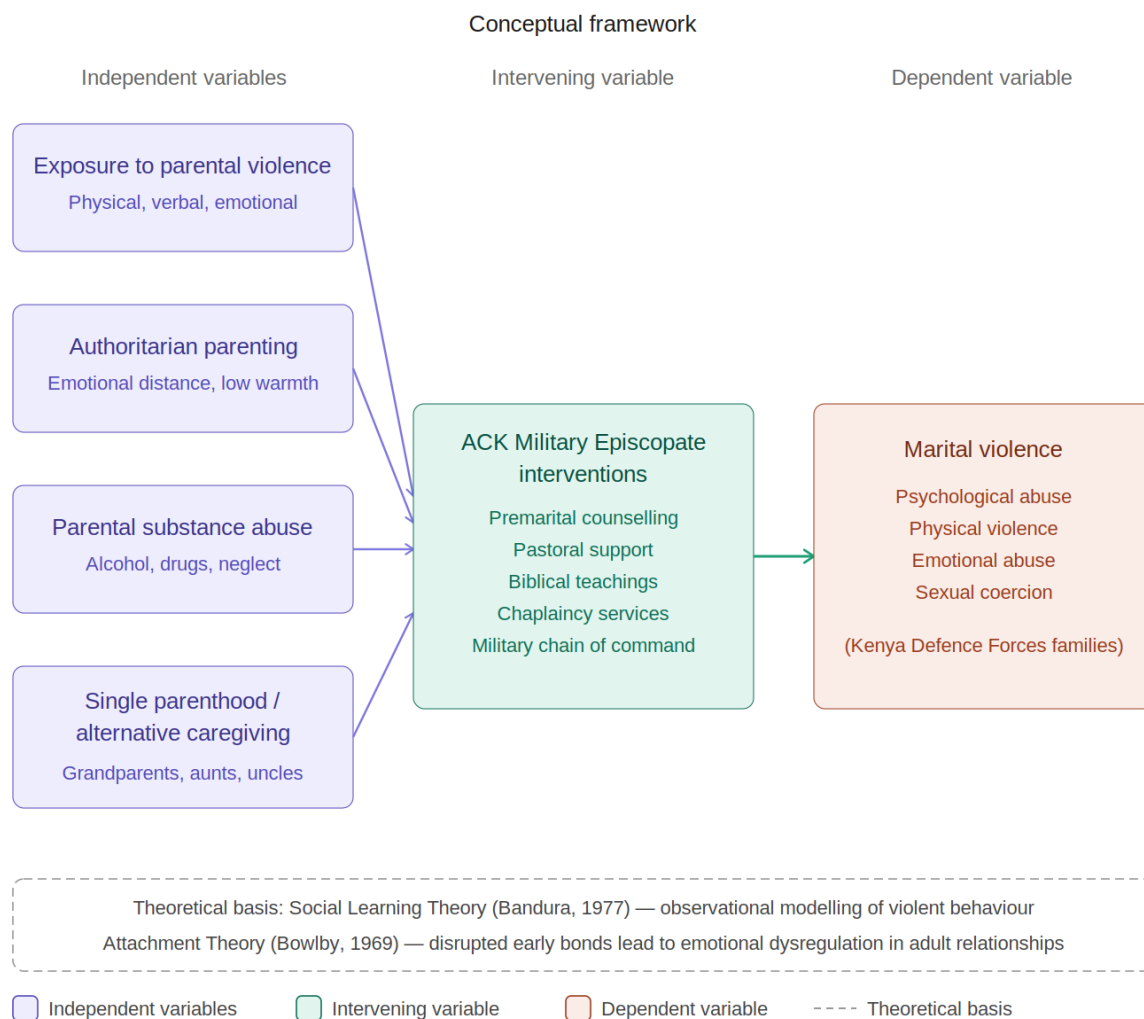


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Intergenerational Transmission of Violence in Military Families

3.0 Research Methodology

The researchers used mixed-methods research to study marital violence which occurs in the Military Episcopate of the Anglican Church of Kenya by conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and structured questionnaires and secondary literature research to study the complex topic and subject matter. (Braithwaite et al., 2017).

The study was undertaken in four strategically chosen military installations that are representative of various operational environments and military services, i.e. Langata Barracks (Nairobi - headquarters of Kenya defense forces), Laikipia Air Base (Nanyuki - arid

peacekeeping-like conditions), Mariakani Barracks (Mombasa - coastal Navy presence), and Gilgil Barracks (tear line operations - infantry).

Out of the 2,091 married people in Anglican churches within these installations (target population), 255 constitute the respondents (12 per cent) were sampled using multistage sampling, which included stratified geographic sampling, cluster sampling, which involved specific barracks, and simple random sampling, which involved membership lists of congregations. The sample was composed of 220 couples of Episcopate Military, 10 chaplains, 6 commanding officers, and 19 commanding officers. The sample was determined through purposive sampling to be able to identify key informants who were specific in their knowledge about intervention programmes.

The data collection was done using three complementary tools. The structured questionnaire, which is attached in Appendix 1 was distributed to 220 Military Episcopate couples in the four installations. It included four thematic sections demographic characteristics, childhood parenting experiences assessed using Likert-scale items that evaluated exposure to parental violence, parenting styles, substance abuse, and single parenthood; current prevalence of marital violence measured using validated scales that assessed psychological, physical, and sexual abuse; and knowledge and perception of Anglican premarital counseling and pastoral programs. The questionnaires were self-administered at the church during their congregational meetings and trained research assistants were recruited among the catechists who were present to assist the participants who had any problems.

Ten chaplains and 25 commanding and officer-commanding officers who were chosen through purposive sampling were interviewed in-depth due to their specialized institutional knowledge of intervention mechanisms and violence transmission dynamics. They were conducted at confidential locations to ensure confidentiality and took about 45-60 minutes each. Participants were grouped into discussions of 8-10 people at church sites in each of the installations and the group discussion recorded to gather collective lived experiences at the point of convergence between military culture and lives of religious communities.

Ethical approval was received before data was collected by the Kenyatta University Ethics Review Committee, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) was obtained to give the research permission and the Directorate of Military Intelligence obtained clearance. Written informed consent was given by all participants, who were assured of voluntary participation and a right to withdraw without penalty, and anonymity

by keeping all data instruments anonymous and ensuring the safety of the data collected by using secure passwords.

Thematic analysis based on the six-step deductive coding system by Braun and Clarke (2013) was used to derive patterns and themes that were in line with the study's objective, and narratives were used to present the qualitative findings. SPSS version 21 was utilized to do descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis was employed to examine the associations between parenting backgrounds and outcomes related to marital violence.

4.0 Study Findings

The findings of the study are represented in the table below.

Table 1: Parenting Background Types and Current Violence Prevalence

Parenting Background Type	Percentage	Current Marital Violence Correlation
Witnessed parental violence (all types)	60-75%	93.3% psychological abuse; 34.5% physical violence
Authoritarian parenting with emotional distance	83.1%	73.3% anger management struggles
Parental substance abuse	49-74%	74% witnessed childhood alcohol parties
Single parenthood/alternative caregiving	48.6-63.9%	81% rarely saw parents in childhood

According to the data provided in Table 1, authoritarian parenting with emotional distance was the most common parenting background trait that affected 83.1% of the respondents. This was supported by the observation of a member of a focus group that observed, our parents were very strict. We were unable to express ourselves. We would keep silent even when we had issues as talking would cause more trouble. The exposure to violence in parents was shockingly high, with the prevalence of between 60% and 75% of the participants in various violent behaviors. One hundred percent of the respondents (100 00 per cent) said they had seen parents destroy their possessions, and 92 per cent had witnessed physical aggression, such as pushing and grabbing. This view was echoed by Rev Yaendi, a chaplain interviewed in this research

when he said that when we counsel couples, we find that practically all were brought up in an environment of violence at home. They think it is normal. They do not even see it as violence anymore.

Parental substance abuse also turned out to be a significant background variable: 74 percent experienced alcohol parties at home as children, 69 percent had witnessed smoking, and 63 percent had witnessed parents in a drunken state. The number of households that consumed alcohol daily was 49%. Jane, who is a military spouse, narrated, “my father used to drink daily after work. He would beat my mother when he was intoxicated. We kids would cover up under the bed. I identify the same pattern with my marriage now”.

Single parenthood and other alternative caregiving arrangements were also prevalent: 64 percent had been raised by grandparents at least once, 53 percent by uncles or aunts. Divorce of parents occurred in 51 per cent of the respondents. One of the commanding officers noted that family stability is challenging in military life. Constant movements imply that children do not have parents they can count on. This impacts on their self-ability to have stable relationships in adulthood.

The security-type responses were manifested in institutional process of reporting violence cases. One chaplain observed that when violence is reported the commanding officer tends to deal with it by disciplinary action. This is, however, a temporary fix. The couple does not get any counselling concerning the childhood trauma or its influence on their marriage.

There were gross gaps of ineffectiveness found in the intervention programmes in the Military Episcopate. The participants rated premarital counselling as sufficient only at 45.1% and only 80.8 per cent of them cited lack of sufficient counselling as one of the causes of their violence. According to a young couple the premarital counselling was biblical roles of husband and wife, no discussion about how childhood influences our relationship or how to deal with the conflict without violence. It was only 46.7% that they believed that the victims were appropriately heard by the church. Sarah who had been intensely psychologically abused added, when I complained to the church leaders, they advised me to pray and obey my husband. They used quotes of scriptures on wives’ submissiveness. They did not inquire concerning my safety or the wellbeing of my children.

Theological perversions started to arise, and 73.3 per cent of them admitted that the bible teachings on submission, forgiveness and permanence of marriage were being distorted to suit the aggressors. More than half (52.5% considered the church to promote violence tolerance.

However, and yet 61.2 per cent of partners were regular churchgoers, there was a paradox in that high religious attendance should have resulted in a low level of violence (93.3 per cent). Through these results, it is shown that the parenting backgrounds that are associated with exposure to violence, emotional distance, substance misuse and instability of caregivers have a close relationship with adult marital violence.

The high rate of psychological abuse (93.3%) and the lack of physical violence (34.5 %) in the respondents with unfavorable childhood experiences is a strong indicator of intergenerational nature. The existing intervention strategies focusing on religious authority and generic counselling are not sufficient and demand considering the issue of childhood trauma and instructions on evidence-based Violence Prevention skills.

5.0 Discussion

This paper suggests that the causes of marital violence in the Military Episcopate is due to the patterns of intergenerational trauma transmission enhanced by the military culture and not sufficiently mitigated by the currently available faith-based interventions. The results are consistent with the literature at large and provide new information related to African military families in religious groups.

These four overlapping and discontinuous categories of parenting background, including violent parenting (60 -75 per cent exposure), authoritarian parenting and emotional distance (83.1 per cent exposure), parental substance abuse (49 -74 per cent exposure) and single parenthood or alternative caregiving (48.6 -63.9 per cent exposure) are not isolated risk factors but cumulative vulnerability. These prevalence rates align with international military population rates reported by Gewirtz et al. (2021) but due to unique African trends such as the 63.9% reported by grandparents due to extended family guidelines.

The almost ubiquitous exposure to some type of adverse parenting (60 -75%) precluded comparative study between individuals with violent histories and those without, shifting the emphasis of the research question on the issue of violent backgrounds and marital violence to the question of how such consistently violent childhoods lead to adult patterns. This is reflective of the data provided by Milaniak and Widom (2015) indicating that childhood maltreatment predisposes violence perpetration in the home and the outside world pointing at systemic, as opposed to individual-level issues.

5.1 Intergenerational Transmission Mechanisms

The study provides convincing data to the hypothesis that intergenerational transmission of violence is determined by a number of mechanisms. Though 60 and 75 per cent of the participants stated that they had watched parental violence, a higher percentage, 93.3 per cent, now hinged on psychological abuse and 34.5 per cent on physical violence in their marital union. This development of childhood observation to adulthood victimization would indicate that the normalization of violent behaviour makes it easy to accept behaviors that would be classified by an outside observer as being abusive. The process of modelling serves to recreate conflict-resolution patterns witnessed in childhood, which is in line with the social-learning theory by Bandura (1977, 2004). The 71.8 percent that had observed verbal aggression in the parent now live in marriages where 93.3 percent are affected by verbal aggression thus illustrating an outright copying of behavioral patterns.

Kimber et al. (2018) supported similar trends in a meta-analysis study and found that exposure to violence early in life predicts future aggressive behaviors through modelling processes. Violence is normalized and it makes it seem unavoidable. When psychological abuse is close to the universal (93.3 per cent), it will be viewed as normal marriage and not abusive, hence losing the motivation to intervene. The present finding supports the earlier research of Ehrensaft et al. (2003), which showed that childhood exposure to violence led to adults developing aggressive behavior patterns and reduced their ability to recognize and resist abusive relationships.

73.3 per cent of respondents are experiencing anger-management problems, indicating a lack of control over their emotions, which began during childhood, with 60.8 per cent of participants reporting emotional aloofness with their parents and 61 per cent experiencing difficulties with expressing their emotions. Thompson et al. (2014) assumes that emotion regulation is formed as a result of parent-child interactions that validate and calm emotions. Children whose emotions are not acknowledged or shown with parental dysregulation do not develop regulatory abilities, which makes them vulnerable to outbursts of aggression during relational conflict.

The 81percent who rarely observed parents as a child and the 64 percent brought up by grandparent's experience attachment disturbances, which develop into insecure attachment styles that undermine adulthood intimacy and trust. Dworkin et al. (2021) determined that intergenerational trauma transmission occurs through attachment disruptions as one of its major

mechanisms. Bowlby's attachment theory (1969, 1973, 1980) describes how early relationships with caregivers instill internal working models which influence relationship competence in adulthood, which is an acute pattern observed in the Military Episcopate families.

5.2 Military Culture Amplification

Military institutional factors add the child vulnerabilities in a unique way. Hyper-masculine culture discourages those who are emotional and defends the expression of anger, implying childhood learning patterns (Rosen et al., 2017). I interviewed an infantry officer and he said, “in military we are trained to be tough and to hold back fear and sadness. But anger is acceptable.” This transpires into our homes where we are unable to appear weak to our wives but end up being angry when they disagree with us.

The authoritarian nature of parenting to the marital relationship is replicated by the hierarchical command structure. Eight-nine per cent of the subjects who had had very strict parenting currently work in military systems that require absolute obedience to authority, and thus this creates a mix up of the correct relational power relationships. Marshall et al. (2005) recorded that military structures tend to recreate coercive patterns of control in intimate relationships.

Military constant deployments, war post traumas, and military deployment stress are other stress factors that trigger violence in people who already have the deficits of emotional-regulation caused by childhood. Taft *et al.* (2011) used meta-analysis to demonstrate that combat exposure causes hypervigilance which then leads to relationship violence because they wanted to show that PTSD serves as a vital predictor of intimate partner violence.

The seventy-four-per cent of people who experienced home alcohol parties as children are currently in a military culture that successfully socializes the use of substances as a bonding unit among the military (Cottler, 2018). Childhood normalization and adult military drinking culture have a conjunctive effect that creates environments that suppress inhibition to conflict and increase the risk of violence. One of the Navy officers said “we drink together after rigorous deployments. It is the way we make it through and become brothers. However, on drunken occasions at home, minor disputes with my wife escalate at home.”

Patterns on a branch basis proved in line with differences in operations. Families with infantry, Armour and artillery had higher rates of violence, which is correlated with high childhood parental absence and stress caused by current deployment compared to Air Force and Navy families, which have more stable schedules. This is consistent with Gewirtz et al. (2021), who

discovered that stress induced by deployment has a negative impact on the quality of parenting and family stability.

5.3 Faith-Based Intervention Failures

There have been failures of faith-based interventions due to a number of reasons. The Military Episcopate is not without excellent intentions but with poor efficacy. 61.2% of partners attend church regularly; however, the rates of violence are almost universal (93.3% psychological, 34.5% physical), which suggests that attendance is not a solution to conversion of relations. This paradox contradicts the belief that religious engagement naturally prevents violence, and aligns with Bernardi and Steyn (2021), who found out that religious engagement may be a preventative or risk factor depending on the content of the theology and the reaction of the community.

Violence is endured because of theological abuse. 73.3% of respondents identify perversions of biblical orthodoxy and 52.5% of respondents identify the church as tolerating violence. As Shannon-Lewy and Dull (2005) noted, the responses of Christian clergy are extremely different with a misinterpretation of the theological meaning of submission, forgiveness and permanence of relationships in marriages creating barriers to help or entrapment of victims in abusive partnerships. A chaplain has admitted that it is scripture that we have used unwittingly to hold families together at whatever cost. We stressed female subjection, and not husbands on the call to self-sacrificing love.

The preaching of forgiveness was done without repentance and change of behaviour. This resulted in a setting where abusers are justified and victims are caught up. Only 46/7% believe that victims are sufficiently heard and only 45.1% regard premarital counselling as sufficient but 88%-point ineffectiveness of counselling as contributory to their violence. This discontinuity shows that they do have programmes that do not have trauma-informed content on how childhood experiences affect adult relationships. Today counselling is placed on generic relationship skills and biblical role teaching instead of helping the couples to understand and transcend certain vulnerabilities based on their parenting experiences.

Knicker-Meyer et al. (2010) have also described the requirement of the interventions of faith-based response to domestic violence that requires working with domestic violence specialised services, clear teaching on the theology of the Bible that draws the line between biblical teachings and toleration to abuse, trauma-informed responses, and the responsibility of

institutional organizations. These are the aspects that the Military Episcopate currently lacks even though there are formal counselling structures.

5.4 Comparison with Community-Based Peace Initiatives

The results are similar to the studies on community-based conflict resolution in other Kenyan settings. In Kenya, Murang'ai (2022) has discussed community-based peace processes in Kenya's Rift Valley where the local peace committees had significant roles in disputes mediation and recovery of social trust. On the same note, Otte and Iteyo (2023) emphasized the use of community-based peace committees to deal with the problem of violence following elections and reported that the effectiveness of such efforts was highly reliant on the local legitimacy and application of traditional conflict resolution systems.

Nevertheless, the hierarchical structure and geographic mobility of the Military Episcopate poses community-based access impediments. Military families also move around as opposed to stable rural societies where the elders counsel on issues, which affects the support systems of the community (Musembi & Iteyo, 2018). Besides, the military chain of command usually overrides community accountability systems which may silence victims who are afraid of losing their careers due to their spouses serve in the military.

The 67 percent effectiveness rating of the community-based interventions in the Tana Delta conflict management (Musembi, 2018) is in drastic contrast with the 45.1% adequacy rating of the Military Episcopate premarital counselling which implies that generic faith-based programmes do not convey the same sense of cultural rootedness and local ownership that makes the community-based interventions effective. This points to the necessity of the Military Episcopate interventions to integrate the principles of community participation, at the same time adjusting to the military mobility and institutional limitations.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

The results confirm Social Learning Theory and Attachment Theory through their demonstration of how these two theories work together. Social Learning Theory provides an explanation for how people learn through observing others. i.e. how observed violence is learned to be conflict resolution (Bandura, 1977, 2004). Attachment Theory- the emotional and relational mediators, how intimacy in childhood and parental absence leading to insecure attachment mediate in adulthood in terms of intimacy, trust, and emotional control (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

The integration avails numerous points of intervention. Cognitive restructuring deals with acquired views concerning the acceptability of violence (Social Learning Theory). Skills developed through emotion regulation training are not developed during childhood (Attachment Theory). Both theories deal with contextual factors that facilitate violence by modifying the environment by supporting the community and holding them responsible (environmental modification). Being the only institution that has access to the Military, the Episcopate can intervene at every tier, which can disrupt the disruption of intergenerational violence cycles to the maximum, should it be designed and applied properly.

Nonetheless, most of the existing interventions achieve this at the cognitive level via biblical instruction on the roles of marriage and ignore instruction on emotion regulation and environmental responsibility. This is the paradox of high religious knowledge and high violence- cognitive teaching will not have an impact on emotional and behavioral patterns rooted in the childhood trauma.

6.0 Recommendations

Reforms proposed in the study involve the broad reform of the Military Episcopate violence prevention and response programmes on five dimensions: First, introduce trauma-informed premarital counseling which clearly discusses how childhood events influence the relationships in adulthood. Assessment of negative childhood experiences, psycho-educating on intergenerational transmission of trauma, skills training in emotional regulation and positive conflict resolution, and working with individual trauma ought to be discussed in therapy. A controlled, randomized experiment by Rosenblum et al. (2018) showed that intergenerational transmission is lower in high-risk mothers whose maternal representations are enhanced and implied that violence cycles can be interrupted with the help of targeted intervention.

Second, establish clear theological education that would discriminate biblical submission and tolerance to abuse. Chaplain training should cover scripture weaponization training, victim-blaming theology training, and chaplain training in responding to violence disclosure. Shannon-Lewy and Dull (2005) reported that clergy training has a huge impact on the quality of response to domestic violence. The Military Episcopate should also clearly define that mutual submission, sacrificial love and respect is biblical marriage, and not one-sided male dominance and female inferiority despite the manner of treatment.

Third, implement relationship training throughout military training. Gewirtz et al. (2018) have discovered that military parenting programme decreases parental distress and suicidal ideation

because preventive interventions have the potential to counter military-related risk factors. The training needs should include the interaction of military culture (hyper-masculinity, hierarchy, deployment stress) with childhood experiences to create risk factors on violence, normalize the seeking of help, and practical skills (concrete) of emotional expression and conflict management.

Fourth, strengthen family support systems and infrastructure such as confidential counselling services that are not within the chain of command, support groups that spouses are struggling with childhood trauma and present violence, substance-abuse treatment combined with violence prevention and safe housing that victims may need whilst they need to separate temporarily. Ouimet et al. (2014) reported that fear of career repercussions and institutional shame are considered perceived barriers to care in military personnel, and this requires confidential support machinery.

Fifth, deal with institutional cultural issues that justify psychological abuse. The fact that the psychological abuse (93.3 %) is very high (almost universal) and physical violence is tolerated (only 34.5%) may indicate institutional acceptance of verbal violence and emotional manipulation. A clear message should be sent by the military leadership that psychological abuse does not coincide with military principles of honour, integrity and protection. The commanding officers need to be trained on how to identify and respond to such family violence accordingly without favoring the service members at the expense of punishing those who have abused them.

Finally, evaluation of longitudinal programmes should be carried out to ascertain the efficacy of the interventions through validated measurement tools on the resolution of childhood trauma, violence prevalence rates in the present, help seeking behaviour, and victim safety. Without a systematic review, well-intended programmes can also remain in operation with minimal effectiveness that would keep the intergenerational cycles of violence going that such programmes are designed to break.

7.0 Conclusion

The article examines the role that parenting histories play in marital violence in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Military Episcopate. The actions of both governmental and military participants interceded by the use of the commanding officers and disciplinary action, but they only brought a temporary solution to a systematic tendency of family maltreatment. Premarital counselling programmes and pastoral support structures were also introduced as possible

solutions but they were not sufficient due to the absence of trauma-informed curricula, theological explanations that favored aggressors and inability to support victims. The intervention that was based on generic biblical teachings about roles in marriage did not help to reduce the causal factors underlying the violence, which stem in childhood traumatization and get worse in the context of military culture.

This study draws four major conclusions. To begin with, the members of the Military Episcopate present a cumulative continuum of negative parenting experiences, mostly violent (60-75%), emotionally detached (83.1%), interrupted by substance abuse (49-74%), and characterized by the instability of caregivers (48.6-63.9%), creating compounded vulnerabilities as opposed to discrete risk factors. These adverse experiences.

References

Astone, N. M., & McLanahan, S. S. (1994). Family structure, residential mobility, and school dropout: A research note. *Demography*, 31(4), 575-584.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>

Baumrind, D. (2013). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. In *Adolescents and Their Families* (pp. 22-61). Routledge.

Bernardi, D. A., & Steyn, F. (2021). Developing and testing a Christian-based program to address depression, anxiety, and stress in intimate partner violence. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 40(1), 39–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2020.1828221>

Beswick, D. (2014). The risks of African military capacity building: Lessons from Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 113(451), 212-231. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu003>

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (No. 79). Random House.

Bowlby, J., Ainsworth, M., & Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775.

Braithwaite, J., Herkes, J., Ludlow, K., Testa, L., & Lamprell, G. (2017). Association between organisational and workplace cultures, and patient outcomes: systematic review. *BMJ open*, 7(11), e017708. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017708>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.

Capaldi, D. M., Knoble, N. B., Shortt, J. W., & Kim, H. K. (2012). A Systematic Review of Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence. *Partner Abuse*, 3(2), 231. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.2.231>

Chao, R., & Tseng, V. (2002). Parenting of asians. *Handbook of parenting*, 4, 59-93.

Cotter, A. (2021). Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview. *Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*, 1-23.

Dworkin, E. R., Krahé, B., & Zinzow, H. (2021). The global prevalence of sexual assault: A systematic review of international research since 2010. *Psychology of Violence*, 11(5), 497–508. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000374>

East, L., Hutchinson, M., Power, T., & Jackson, D. (2020). “Being a father”: constructions of fatherhood by men with absent fathers. *Journal of Family Studies*, 26(3), 477–487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2018.1459308>

Ehrensaft, M. K., Cohen, P., Brown, J., Smailes, E., Chen, H., & Johnson, J. G. (2003). Intergenerational transmission of partner violence: A 20-year prospective study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71(4), 741–753. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.71.4.741>

Ehrensaft, M. K., Cohen, P., Brown, J., Smailes, E., Chen, H., & Johnson, J. G. (2003). Intergenerational transmission of partner violence: A 20-year prospective study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71(4), 741–753. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.71.4.741>

Fals-Stewart, William, Kelley, Michelle L., Fincham, Frank D., Golden, James, Logsdon, Timothy

Frecks, F. E. (2023). Gender-based violence as a destructive form of warfare against families: A practical theological response. *HTS Theological Studies*, 79(2), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8969>

Gewirtz, A.H., DeGarmo, D.S. & Zamir, O. After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools: 1-Year Outcomes of an Evidence-Based Parenting Program for Military Families Following Deployment. *Prev Sci* 19, 589–599 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0839-4>

Hoeve, M., Dubas, J.S., Eichelsheim, V.I. *et al.* The Relationship Between Parenting and Delinquency: A Meta-analysis. *J Abnorm Child Psychol* **37**, 749–775 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-009-9310-8>

Journal of Family Psychology, Vol 18(2), Jun 2004, 319-330

Karimli, L., Ssewamala, F. M., & Ismayilova, L. (2012). Extended families and perceived caregiver support to AIDS orphans in Rakai district of Uganda. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(7), 1351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2012.03.015>

Khosa-Nkatini, H.P. and Muthivhi, M.E., 2026. Leveraging practical theology in combating gender-based violence in South Africa. *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, *60*(1), p.3258.

Kimber, M., Adham, S., Gill, S., McTavish, J., & MacMillan, H. L. (2018). The association between child exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) and perpetration of IPV in adulthood— A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *76*, 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.11.007>

Kimber, M., Adham, S., Gill, S., McTavish, J., & MacMillan, H. L. (2018). The association between child exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) and perpetration of IPV in adulthood A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *76*, 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.11.007>

Knickmeyer, N., Levitt, H., & Horne, S. G. (2010). Putting on Sunday Best: The Silencing of Battered Women Within Christian Faith Communities. *Feminism & Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509347470>

Lander, L., Howsare, J., & Byrne, M. (2013). The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Families and Children: From Theory to Practice. *Social Work in Public Health*, *28*(3–4), 194–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2013.759005>

Leban, L., Doherty, S. L., & Brundidge, T. F. (2026). Neutralization of Intimate Partner Violence Victimization: A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis. *Deviant Behavior*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2026.2613294>

Marshall, A. D., Panuzio, J., & Taft, C. T. (2005). Intimate partner violence among military veterans and active duty servicemen. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *25*(7), 862-876. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2005.05.009>

Milaniak, Izabela, Widom, Cathy Spatz *Psychology of Violence*, Vol 5(3), Jul 2015, 246-255

Mombo, Esther and Joziase, Heleen (2022) "Deconstructing Gendered vumilia (perseverance) Theology in times of the Gender-based Violence Pandemic," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 24: Iss. 4, Article 14. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol24/iss4/14>

Murang'ai, P. (2022). *Christian Based Interventions to Mitigate the Effects of Interethnic Conflict in Njoro Sub-county, 1992-2012* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Musembi, P & Iteyo, C. (2018). Exploring the Role of Community Participation Approach in the Management of Protracted Conflicts in Africa: A Case of Tana River County, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(7), 4 – 17.

Musembi, P. (2018). An assessment of the approaches employed in the management of conflicts: A case of Tana River County, Kenya.

Otte, Z. E., & Iteyo, C. (2023). The Effectiveness of Peace Building Strategies Used in the Management of Electoral Conflict in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 4(2), 1288–1297. <https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.4.2.130>

Ouimet, M., Bédard, P., Léon, G., & Dagenais, C. (2014). Are indicators of faculty members' credibility associated with how often they present research evidence to public or partly government-owned organisations? A cross-sectional survey. *Evidence & Policy*, 10(1), 5-27. Retrieved Jan 24, 2026, from <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426413X662699>

Pargament, K. I. (Ed.), & Mahoney, A., & Exline, J. J., Jones, J. W. (Eds.), & Shafranske, E. P. (2013). Envisioning an integrative paradigm for the psychology of religion and spirituality. In K. I. Pargament, J. J. Exline, & J. W. Jones (Eds.), *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality (Vol. 1): Context, theory, and research* (pp. 3–19). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14045-001>

Park, S., Schepp, K.G. A Systematic Review of Research on Children of Alcoholics: Their Inherent Resilience and Vulnerability. *J Child Fam Stud* 24, 1222–1231 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-014-9930-7>

Peverill, M., Rosen, M. L., Lurie, L. A., Sambrook, K. A., Sheridan, M. A., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2023). Childhood trauma and brain structure in children and adolescents. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 59, 101180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2022.101180>

Peverill, M., Rosen, M. L., Lurie, L. A., Sambrook, K. A., Sheridan, M. A., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2023). Childhood trauma and brain structure in children and adolescents. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, *59*, 101180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2022.101180>

Piebler, T.F., Wang, G., He, Y. *et al.* Cascading Effects of the Family Check-Up on Mothers' and Fathers' Observed and Self-Reported Parenting and Young Adult Antisocial Behavior: a 12-Year Longitudinal Intervention Trial. *Prev Sci* **25**, 786–797 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-024-01685-8>

Rodriguez, A.J., Margolin, G. Parental Incarceration, Transnational Migration, and Military Deployment: Family Process Mechanisms of Youth Adjustment to Temporary Parent Absence. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* **18**, 24–49 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-014-0176-0>

Rosenblum, K., Muzik, M., Morelen, D., Alfafara, E., Miller, N., Waddell, R., Schuster, M., & Ribardo, J. (2017). A Community-based Randomized Controlled Trial of Mom Power Parenting Intervention for Mothers with Interpersonal Trauma Histories and their Young Children. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, *20*(5), 673. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-017-0734-9>

Scott, K.L., Thompson-Walsh, C. & Nsiri, A. Parenting in Fathers Who Have Exposed Their Children to Domestic Violence: Identifying Targets for Change. *Int. Journal on Child Malt.* **1**, 51–75 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-018-0004-0>

Scott, K.L., Thompson-Walsh, C. & Nsiri, A. Parenting in Fathers Who Have Exposed Their Children to Domestic Violence: Identifying Targets for Change. *Int. Journal on Child Malt.* **1**, 51–75 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-018-0004-0>

Shannon-Lewy, C., & Dull, V. T. (2005). The response of christian clergy to domestic violence: Help or hindrance? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *10*(6), 647-659. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2005.02.004>

Silverstein, L. B., & Auerbach, C. F. (1999). Deconstructing the essential father. *American Psychologist*, *54*(6), 397–407. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.6.397>

Taft, Casey T., Watkins, Laura E., Stafford, Jane, Street, Amy E., Monson, Candice M. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol 79(1), Feb 2011, 22-33

Vanassche, S., Sodermans, A.K., Matthijs, K. *et al.* The Effects of Family Type, Family Relationships and Parental Role Models on Delinquency and Alcohol Use Among Flemish Adolescents. *J Child Fam Stud* **23**, 128–143 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9699-5>

Whitfield, C. L., Dube, S. R., Felitti, V. J., & Anda, R. F. (2005). Adverse childhood experiences and hallucinations. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *29*(7), 797-810. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.01.004>

Yoon, K. J., Ming, G. L., & Song, H. (2018). Epitranscriptomes in the adult mammalian brain: dynamic changes regulate behavior. *Neuron*, *99*(2), 243-245.