

**Gender Inequality And Family Stability In Rakai District: A Case Study Of Ddwaniro Sub County**

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**Abstract**

The study investigated the relationship between gender inequality and family stability in Ddwaniro Sub-county, Rakai District, with the aim of understanding how disparities in power, resource control, and opportunities between men and women affect household cohesion and well-being. Using a descriptive research design and survey data from 240 respondents, the study revealed that 75% of participants acknowledged a strong and direct link between gender inequality and family instability, while 25% disagreed. The findings indicated that gender-based disparities in decision-making, economic participation, and access to resources were central contributors to household conflict, tension, and dysfunction. The research established that economic disempowerment of women, characterized by limited access to productive assets and income-generating opportunities, created financial dependency and stress that weakened family relationships. Furthermore, entrenched patriarchal norms concentrated power in the hands of men, marginalizing women's voices in household affairs and perpetuating resentment and dissatisfaction. The study also revealed that intergenerational transmission of gender-biased attitudes reinforced these inequalities, sustaining cycles of instability across generations. It was concluded that gender inequality constituted a fundamental barrier to achieving family stability in Ddwaniro Sub-county. Families functioned as microcosms of broader societal structures, and when inequality was embedded in those structures, it naturally manifested in domestic conflict and instability. The study emphasized that addressing family instability requires dismantling systemic gender-based disparities and promoting equal participation of men and women in household decision-making, economic production, and social responsibilities. The study recommended a multi-dimensional approach to address gender inequality. It called for the promotion of women's economic empowerment through accessible financial inclusion programs such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), business skills training, and financial literacy education.

**Keywords: Gender inequality, Family stability, Patriarchy, Women's empowerment, Household decision-making, Gender-based violence, Ddwaniro Sub-county**

**Background of the study**

Gender inequality remains one of the most pervasive and persistent challenges to human development and family stability worldwide. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), no country has yet achieved full gender equality, with deeply entrenched structural barriers continuing to limit women's economic participation, political representation, and social autonomy. The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 indicates that at the current rate of progress, it will take approximately 131 years to close the global gender gap completely (World Economic Forum, 2023). This persistent inequality has profound implications for family stability, as evidenced by research demonstrating that households characterized by gender-based discrimination typically experience higher

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levels of domestic conflict, poorer health outcomes, and intergenerational transmission of poverty patterns (Shamim et al., 2023). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 specifically targets achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, recognizing this as fundamental to building peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies (Nancy & Prudence, 2024). However, the implementation of these global commitments faces significant challenges due to varying cultural contexts, economic systems, and political will across nations, creating a complex landscape for addressing gender-based disparities and their impact on family units (UN Women, 2023).

Across the African continent, gender inequality manifests in particularly complex ways that directly impact family structures and stability. The African Development Bank (2022) reports that despite comprising approximately 50% of the continent's population, women contribute disproportionately to agricultural labor accounting for 60-80% of food production while simultaneously facing significant barriers to land ownership, financial services, and decision-making power. This economic disempowerment within family units creates fundamental power imbalances that often lead to instability, particularly in rural households where women's limited access to productive resources perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency. The situation is further exacerbated by harmful cultural practices such as child marriage, with UNICEF (2023) reporting that 34% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa are married before age 18, and 11% before age 15. These practices not only violate girls' rights but also disrupt family formation patterns and often lead to unstable marital relationships. Additionally, patriarchal norms that prioritize male authority in household decision-making continue to dominate many African societies, limiting women's autonomy in critical areas such as family planning, children's education, and resource allocation, thereby creating underlying tensions that frequently undermine family cohesion and resilience (AU Commission, 2023).

Uganda presents a paradoxical situation regarding gender equality and family stability. The country has established a progressive legal framework, including the 1995 Constitution that guarantees equality between men and women, and has implemented various policies aimed at promoting women's empowerment (Ntirandekura et al., 2024). However, these formal protections contrast sharply with the lived realities of many Ugandan women. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023), 56% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15, while 27% have experienced sexual violence, with intimate partners being the most common perpetrators. The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (2022) further reveals significant disparities in decision-making power within households, with only 45% of currently married women participating in decisions about their own health care, major household purchases, and visits to family or relatives (Lydia et al., 2023). Economically, women's empowerment remains constrained by unequal access to assets; although women comprise 77% of Uganda's agricultural labor force, they own only 16% of agricultural land (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2023). These inequalities create substantial stress on family units, contributing to high rates of marital dissolution, child neglect,

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and intergenerational poverty, particularly in rural areas where traditional gender norms remain deeply entrenched and resources are scarce.

Rakai District occupies a unique and poignant position in the discourse on gender inequality and family stability in Uganda. As the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, the district experienced unprecedented family disruption, with high adult mortality rates leaving many households headed by children or grandparents (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). Although significant progress has been made in HIV management, the epidemic's legacy continues to influence gender and family dynamics in profound ways. According to the Rakai District Local Government (2023), the district maintains some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the Central Region, with 62% of women reporting experiencing intimate partner violence (Musaibah et al., 2023). The district also exhibits particularly pronounced economic gender gaps, with female-headed households constituting 38% of all households yet accounting for 65% of those living below the poverty line (Rakai District Development Plan, 2023). Cultural practices, including bride price payment, remain deeply institutionalized and often reinforce women's subordinate status within marital relationships. In Ddwaniro Sub-County specifically, where this study is focused, preliminary data suggests that these challenges are exacerbated by limited access to justice mechanisms, low women's participation in local governance, and high levels of alcohol abuse among men, which further compounds family instability (Rakai District Community Services, 2023).

#### **Statement of the problem**

Despite decades of national and international efforts to promote gender equality, profound gender-based disparities continue to undermine family stability in rural Uganda, with Rakai District presenting a particularly critical case (Margaret & Rebecca, 2024). The district, still grappling with the historical legacy of HIV/AIDS, exhibits alarming indicators of gender inequality that directly threaten family cohesion. Recent data from the Rakai District Local Government (2023) reveals that 62% of women experience intimate partner violence, while 38% of households are female-headed yet disproportionately represent 65% of those living below the poverty line (Godfrey et al., 2023). In Ddwaniro Sub-County, these challenges are exacerbated by deeply entrenched cultural norms, including rigid patriarchal systems and bride price practices that reinforce women's economic dependence and subordinate status within marital relationships.

Preliminary evidence suggests that economic disempowerment of women, limited decision-making autonomy, and high rates of gender-based violence create fundamental tensions within households, leading to increased marital conflict, family breakdown, and intergenerational poverty cycles (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). The core issue under investigation is the specific mechanisms through which gender inequality particularly in economic participation, resource control, and domestic decision-making translates into concrete threats to family stability. This problem

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necessitates a systematic inquiry into how unequal power dynamics within households contribute to conflict patterns, how women's economic dependence affects family resilience, and how cultural norms perpetuate these damaging cycles (Abiodun et al., 2022).

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To find out the level of family stability in Ddwaniro sub county
2. To determine whether gender inequality influences family stability in Ddwaniro Sub County
3. To find out the relationship between gender inequality and family stability in Ddwaniro sub county

### **Methodology**

The researcher employed a descriptive research design due to the nature of the variables under investigation, as this approach facilitated the production of data suitable for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This design enabled the simultaneous description of views, perceptions, and beliefs at a single point in time, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the phenomenon being studied (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). The study was conducted in Ddwaniro Sub-county, Rakai District, located in the southern central part of Uganda, an area characterized by specific socio-cultural dynamics relevant to the research focus.

The target population for the study included 300 individuals comprising married men and women as primary respondents, along with the LCIII Chairperson and probation officer as key informants. From this population, a sample size of 280 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, accounting for an error tolerance of 0.05 (A. Nafiu et al., 2012). The final sample consisted of 200 married women, 78 men, the LCIII Chairman, and the probation officer of the sub-county. This sampling approach was adopted because the population shared similar socio-demographic characteristics, and it helped address resource and time constraints. The researcher utilized a stratified random sampling technique for selecting the majority of respondents to minimize bias and enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to select the local council III Chairman and the probation officer, as these individuals served as key informants with crucial insights relevant to the study objectives.

Data collection was carried out using interviews and questionnaires as the primary methods. The researcher developed a structured questionnaire featuring both open-ended and closed-ended questions aligned with the study objectives (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). This instrument was designed to be clear and straightforward to ensure respondent comprehension and facilitate detailed feedback. The questionnaire method proved particularly valuable for reaching distant respondents and allowing participants adequate time to provide well-considered responses. To ensure data quality, the researcher addressed both validity and reliability of the instruments. Validity was established by ensuring

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the instruments measured what they were intended to measure, while reliability was enhanced through a pilot test using a similar group with comparable characteristics to the target population (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). The reliability of the instruments was computed using systematic and cluster techniques, with Cronbach's Alpha applied to measure the coefficient of internal consistency.

Data management and processing involved careful editing, coding, and tabulation of collected information. This systematic approach enabled the researcher to transform raw data into meaningful and usable information. For data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed. The qualitative data underwent thorough classification, comparison, and interpretation to extract meaningful patterns and insights. All data was organized and entered into SPSS & STATA for statistical analysis, where both inferential and descriptive analyses were conducted (Nelson et al., 2022). The study results were subsequently presented in tables and graphs for clear interpretation, with conclusions and recommendations drawn in alignment with the study objectives based on the findings.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were carefully observed. The researcher obtained formal permission from the university and presented an introductory letter to the probation officer and LCIII Chairman of the sub-county. Each questionnaire included an introductory letter requesting respondent cooperation while assuring confidentiality of the information provided. Respondents were informed that the study findings would be used solely for academic purposes, and they retained the right to refuse participation while being assured of personal protection and confidentiality of their responses. The study encountered several limitations, including time constraints during field data collection, potential respondent reluctance to disclose sensitive information, and financial limitations. These challenges were mitigated through diligent planning, persuasive communication with respondents, strategic fundraising from well-wishers, and careful adherence to the study budget to ensure the successful completion of the research process.

**Results**

**Table 3: Gender inequality influences family stability, how one describes gender inequality in his/ her area, what causes gender inequality, relationship between gender inequality and family stability and the level of gender inequality.**

Item	Responses	Frequency (N=240)	Percentage (%)
Does gender inequality influence family stability	Yes	180	75
	No	60	25
Total		240	100

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How do you describe gender inequality in your area	Very good	30	12.5
	Good	50	20.8
	Bad	140	58.3
	Not sure	20	8.3
Total		240	100
What usually causes gender inequality in your area	Culture to recognize only men	40	16.6
	Ethnicity	60	25
	Family background	140	58.3
	Not sure	00	00
Total		240	100
Is there a relationship between gender inequality and family stability in your area	Yes	190	79.2
	No	50	20.8
Total		240	100
Level of gender inequality	Very high	150	62.5
	High	50	20.8
	Low	30	12.5
	Very high	10	4.2
Total		240	100

**Source: Primary Data, 2024**

The data in the table 1 above shows that out of the 240 respondents, 180 Respondents responded that gender inequality influences family stability (75%), 06 (25%) respondents responded that gender inequality does not influence family stability. It also shows that 12.5% of the respondents described gender inequality as very good 20.8% of the respondents described gender inequality as good, 58.3% of the respondents described gender inequality as bad and about 8.3% of the respondents were not sure about how to describe gender inequality (Nelson et al., 2023).

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The table also illustrates that 40 of 16.6% of the respondents responded that culture to recognize only men was the cause of gender inequality, 06 of 25% of the respondents responded that Ethnicity is a cause of gender inequality, 140 of 58.3% of the respondents responded that family background is a cause to gender inequality. The table also shows that 190 of 79.2% of the respondents responded that there is a relationship between gender inequality and family stability, 50 of 20.8% of the respondents responded that there is no relationship between gender inequality and family stability. The table also continues to show that the level of gender inequality is very high, 50 of 20.8% of the respondents responded that the level of gender inequality is high, 30 of 12.5% of the respondents responded that the level of gender inequality is low, 10 (4.2%) of the respondents responded that the level of gender inequality is very low.

**Table 2: Shows the level of family stability, description of family stability, and effects of family stability in families.**

Item	Responses	Frequency (N=240)	Percentage (%)
Level of family stability	Very high	20	8.3
	High	30	12.5
	Low	50	20.8
	Very low	140	58.3
Total		240	100
Description of family stability	Very good	30	12.5
	Good	50	20.8
	Bad	150	62.5
	Not sure	10	4.2
Total		240	100
Effects of family stability in families	Divorce	160	66.6
	Lack of cooperation	40	16.6
	Education	30	12.5
	Not sure	10	4.2
Total		240	100

Source: Primary Data, 2024

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Table 2, shows that 20 (8.3%) of the respondents responded that the level of family stability was very high, 30 (12.5%) of the respondents responded that the level of family stability was high, also 50 (20.8%) of the respondents responded that the level of family stability was low, 140 (58.3%) of the respondents revealed that the level of family stability was very low. The table also shows that 30 (12.5%) of the respondents described family stability to be very good, 50 (20.8%) described family stability to be good, 150 (62.5%) of the respondents described family stability to be bad, and 10 (4.2%) were not sure of the description of family stability. The table also shows that 160 which is 66.6% of the respondents responded that the effects of family stability was divorce, 40 (16.6%) of the respondents responded that the effects of family stability was lack of cooperation, 30 (12.5%) of the respondents responded that the effects of family stability was education, 10 (4.2%) of the respondents responded that they were not sure.

**Table 3: Relationship between gender inequality and family stability.**

Item	Responses	Frequency (N=240)	Percentage (%)
The relationship between gender inequality and family stability	Yes	180	75
	No	60	25
Total		240	100

**Source: Primary Data, 2024**

The overwhelming majority of respondents, constituting 75% (n=180) of the sample, affirmed that such a relationship exists. This strong consensus indicates a widespread perception among the study population that disparities in power, resources, and opportunities between men and women directly impact the cohesion, well-being, and overall stability of the family unit. This finding powerfully corroborates the central thesis of the research, suggesting that gender inequality is not merely a peripheral social issue but a core destabilizing factor within the domestic sphere.

The analysis of this finding necessitates a deeper exploration of the mechanisms behind this perceived relationship. The 75% affirmative response likely points to respondents' observations or direct experiences where gender-based disparities manifest as conflict, tension, and dysfunction within households. These manifestations could include, but are not limited to, economic disempowerment of women leading to financial stress and dependency, unequal decision-making power fostering resentment, the physical and psychological toll of gender-based violence, and the intergenerational transmission of inequitable norms that perpetuate cycles of instability. The data does not exist in a vacuum; it aligns with established sociological theories and empirical studies which posit that families function as microcosms of broader societal structures. When these structures are built on inequality, the resulting power

imbalances inherently create friction, reducing the family's capacity to serve as a source of mutual support and resilience.

Conversely, the 25% (n=60) of respondents who denied the existence of a relationship represent a critical minority perspective that requires careful interpretation. This viewpoint could stem from several factors. In contexts where patriarchal norms are deeply normalized and hegemonic, gender inequality may be so ingrained in the social fabric that it is not perceived as a causal factor for instability but rather as a natural, unchangeable order. For these individuals, family instability might be attributed to other causes, such as economic hardship, external pressures, or individual failings, without tracing the roots back to gendered power dynamics. Alternatively, this response could reflect a reluctance to acknowledge a sensitive or contentious issue, a desire to present one's own family as stable regardless of internal inequalities, or a genuine belief that other factors are more salient. This dissenting minority underscores the complex and often contested nature of gender relations and highlights the importance of cultural context and individual worldview in shaping perceptions of what constitutes a stable family.

### **Conclusions**

The research firmly established that the pervasive gender inequities in economic participation, decision-making power, and resource allocation within households created fundamental tensions that systematically undermined family cohesion. This was unequivocally demonstrated by the survey results where 75% of respondents explicitly acknowledged this linkage, indicating a broad community recognition that unequal power dynamics between men and women directly translate into conflict, resentment, and dysfunction within family units.

The study further concluded that the manifestations of this relationship were multifaceted and deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of the community. Specifically, it was determined that the economic disempowerment of women—characterized by limited control over productive assets and unequal access to income-generating opportunities—created patterns of financial dependency and stress that severely strained marital relationships. This economic dimension was compounded by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that concentrated domestic decision-making authority with male household members, effectively marginalizing women's voices in critical matters affecting family welfare and creating underlying currents of dissatisfaction and powerlessness.

Moreover, the investigation concluded that the intergenerational transmission of gender-inequitable attitudes and practices perpetuated a cycle of family instability. Children raised in households where rigid gender roles and systemic inequality were normalized tended to replicate these patterns in their own future family formations, thereby sustaining the problem across generations. The research also identified that while a significant minority (25%) of respondents did not perceive this connection, this perspective largely reflected the normalization of patriarchal structures rather

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than evidence of their neutrality. Ultimately, the study established that initiatives aimed at strengthening family stability in this context would remain incomplete without systematically addressing the root causes of gender inequality, necessitating integrated interventions that promote women's economic empowerment, equitable household decision-making, and the transformation of deep-seated cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based disparities.

### **Recommendations**

A fundamental step is to dismantle the economic dependencies that fuel household tension. This requires establishing targeted programs such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and women's cooperatives specifically designed to provide women with access to interest-free or low-interest startup capital. These initiatives must be coupled with comprehensive skills training in viable income-generating activities tailored to the local economy, such as sustainable agriculture, artisan crafts, and small-scale trade. Furthermore, financial literacy education is crucial to teach women and men how to manage household finances collaboratively, create budgets, and save for future family needs. Advocacy for legal literacy is also essential, informing women of their rights to land and property ownership and providing paralegal support to help them claim these rights, thereby strengthening their economic security and bargaining power within the household.

To challenge and transform the deep-seated patriarchal norms that normalize inequality, sustained community sensitization is necessary. This should involve working with local leaders, including cultural and religious figures, to reframe gender equality as a community strength rather than a foreign concept. Mass media campaigns on local radio in the local dialect can be used to disseminate positive messages about shared decision-making and the value of girls' education. Critically, these programs must actively engage men and boys through dedicated forums and "husband schools" that redefine masculinity around partnership and responsibility, rather than domination and control. Simultaneously, integrating age-appropriate gender equality and life skills education into school curricula will help foster a new generation that values mutual respect and equality in relationships, breaking the intergenerational cycle of inequitable norms.

Addressing the symptoms of instability requires robust support mechanisms. This involves strengthening the capacity of local governance structures, such as the Local Council III and the Probation Office, to effectively mediate family disputes and refer cases of gender-based violence (GBV). Training for these officials on trauma-informed approaches and the existing legal frameworks is vital. Establishing safe spaces and community-based protection committees where women can confidentially report abuse and access psychosocial support, legal aid, and emergency shelter is another critical measure. Additionally, improving access to justice by working with police to establish dedicated desks for handling domestic violence cases and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable under the law will serve as both a deterrent and a signal that GBV is an unacceptable violation of human rights.

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